

Interagency Wildfire Management Team
Meeting Notes
June 18, 2003

Jim Whittington (Bandelier National Monument) reported that the fire hazards have decreased after recent rains. However, several fires in Arizona represent severe threats to the local jurisdictions of that state. Jim also expressed concern with regard to several populations of Canada thistle that have been reported along Highway 4 on Bandelier and LANL property.

Elmer Torres (Government Relations Office, LANL) has been assisting the northern Pueblos as they prepare for the wildfire season.

Manny L'Esperance (Emergency Management and Response, LANL) reported that fuel moistures have increased in the smaller size classes. However, 1000-hour fuels remain dry. Estimates of recent rainfall register between 0.16 inches and 1.11 inches. Some of the weather monitoring sites on LANL have not received any rain. Manny also noted that specific improvements to fire roads are recommended. Most importantly, most of the fire roads would benefit from hardening at the points where they cross drainages.

Rob Farris (Fire Protection Group, LANL) is initiating an assessment of baseline needs for fire protection at LANL. The assessment will be completed in about two weeks. A report of the findings will be issued in about two months.

Gene Darling (Emergency Management and Response, LANL) reported that up to 30 lightning fires per day have been reported. Some of these have required active suppression.

Ed Pulliam (Los Alamos County Fire Department) reported that thinning on Los Alamos County lands continues as scheduled. Ed also announced that the County adopted an emergency ordinance imposing restrictions for 90 days on the use of fireworks, open fires, outdoor smoking and other sources of ignition. Penalties were established for violations of this ordinance. Contact the Los Alamos Fire Department (662-8328) for further information.

Randy Balice (Ecology Group, LANL) recently presented safety information relative to windthrown trees at the LANL All Managers meeting and at the RRES Division Management Council meeting. Randy has also been providing wildfire behavior modeling outputs to Bill Purtymun and Dwight Stevenson, who are using these results to design a safety preparedness exercise at TA-54. Finally, Randy's field team has sampled 18 plots. These include sample plots in thinned and unthinned piñon-juniper woodlands, thinned ponderosa pine forests and severely burned mixed conifer forests.

Phil Taylor (Office of Emergency Management, Los Alamos County) reported that up to 75 percent of the target homeowners have been contacted as part of the Los Alamos County Defensible Space Project. Phil also announced that the drain tunnel under the Diamond Drive, as it passes over Pueblo Canyon, is nearing completion. Finally, Phil reminded the IWMT that Community Safety Days will be conducted in downtown Los Alamos on the morning of June 26.

Bill Gall (Los Alamos Area Organization, DOE) announced the Joint Powers Agreement has been signed and was forwarded to the State on May 30.

Todd Haagenstad (Ecology Group, LANL) is participating in a collaborative effort with the Water Quality Group to conduct a rapid assessment of the status of thinning and rehabilitation projects at LANL. Todd is also directing the work on the preliminary draft of the Wildland Fire Management Plan for LANL. The plan will include a quality assurance plan and a business plan.

The next IWMT meeting will be at 9:30 AM on Wednesday, July 2, at TA-21, Building 210 in the RRES-ECO Conference Room (142). The IWMT meets every other week and these meetings are open to the public. Contact Randy Balice (balice@lanl.gov, 665-1270) for further information, or to get on the distribution list for these meeting notes.